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WHAT CHRISTIANITY TEACHES

RESPECTING

THE BODY.

A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH, CRATHIE,

11TH OCTOBER 1857.

BY ROBERT LEE, D.D.

REGIUS PROFESSOR OF BIBLICAL CRITICISM AND BIBLICAL ANTIQUITIES IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH, MINISTER OF GREYFRIARS', ONE OF HER MAJESTY'S CHAPLAINS IN ORDINARY IN SCOTLAND, AND ONE OF THE DEANS OF THE CHAPEL ROYAL.

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SERMON.

"Glorify God in your body."—1 Cor. vi. 20.

"The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."—Luke ix. 56.

The constitution of human nature has been a subject of earnest study to thoughtful men in all ages. Like everything else, it is full of difficulty and mystery. The connexion of two elements so unlike as the intelligent conscious mind, and the gross fleshly habitation, has always appeared wonderful and perplexing: the more so, as these two seemed to act as antagonists and hindrances, rather than allies and fellow-workers, each of the other; as if they had been joined, that both might be rendered at once powerless and miserable; "the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, so that we do not the things that we would."

To solve the hard problem, why we should be thus distracted by the two elements of our nature propelling us in opposite directions—the one soaring to heaven, while the other drags us down to the dust of the earth—innumerable attempts have been made; dark

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sometimes impious speculations have been hazarded; till the clouds of ignorance, agitated awhile by the whirlwinds of doubt, sunk at last into the midnight of scepticism and despair, with no gleam of light to keep hope alive, or give promise of a dawn.

The Gentile sages—those men among the ancient heathen who made it their business to seek knowledge, and who professed an ardent desire for wisdom, sincerely, no doubt, in many cases,—though some of them also became infatuated in their reasonings, till their foolish minds were utterly darkened,—those ancient thinkers solved the riddle by supposing that matter, no less than mind, was an eternal and independent principle, and not only essentially evil, but the ultimate root of all evil; that the body, being matter, was both incurably corrupt itself, and the source of corruption to the soul, its companion, or rather, for the time, its prisoner;—that the *soul* was *the man*, which, having existed before, had been temporarily immured, for some reason which could only be conjectured, within the walls of this fleshly dungeon; and therefore the liberation and beatitude of the man, *i.e.*, *the soul*, was to be gained by his being delivered from the defiling and degrading incubus. His duty, accordingly, was to punish, reduce, and humble the enemy; and his final victory consisted in its total destruction; so that he should regard

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the death of his body as the commencement or restoration of his proper life. This was the salvation and heaven of *the man*; for he began to die when he was born in the flesh, and it was only when he died that he began to live.

The doctrine of a future state was not unknown to those sages. The best of them believed in such a state, or rather they hoped for it. But the object of their aspirations was not the resuscitation and reunion of the soul and body, now purified and perfected; but only the renewed or continued life of the *soul*, happily divorced at length from that miserable alliance, whence its contamination was derived in its mortal existence. When Paul (Acts xvii.) propounded the resurrection, in the Christian sense, to the philosophers at Athens, the doctrine appeared to them so preposterous, that they could not listen to the teacher of it with gravity, but mocked him as "a setter forth of foreign dæmons."

This is the wisdom of the ancient sages. This is the doctrine of Plato, which we are taught so diligently and so painfully to read in Greek at grammar schools and colleges. Need we wonder that his famous pupil, Plotinus, "would never mention who his father or his mother was, or where he was born, or anything of that description, because he always appeared to be ashamed that he had a body."

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But why raise up again from their graves these defunct, almost forgotten, absurdities—these "follies of the wise," which, like "the faults of the good," we should bury in silence? For this reason, because, though themselves departed, they may have left a progeny of erroneous opinions and morbid feelings behind them, which still live, and still are active in working mischief. The monasticism of the ancient Church, and of the Middle Ages, is, without doubt, a genuine descendant of that "science falsely so called," though fathered upon Christianity—with which indeed it has no real affinity, as we shall see. And even among those whose religious opinions appear to stand farthest apart from the Catholic and mediæval types, the same influence may, I think, be distinctly traced.

Having thus merely indicated the opinions which some of the wisest men among the heathens entertained regarding "the human body and its connexion with man," I shall now refer you to two other authorities, the *Holy Scriptures* and *Modern Science;* both of which, as we shall find, present to us a very different view of this important matter.

But some of you may feel disposed to ask this preliminary question,—Why, after being misled by *ancient* philosophy, should we betake ourselves to philosophy again, modern though it be? What charm is there in the word *modern?* Is not *philosophy* or

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science, man's wisdom, whether it be *old* or *new?* whether propounded at Athens, four or five centuries before Christ, or at London, or Paris, or Edinburgh, eighteen centuries after Christ?

It is astonishing how people suffer themselves to be misled in their judgments by *words.* Thus, the wild hypotheses of certain men, in ancient times, who did not observe or investigate nature, but imagined and dreamed, were called *science* or *philosophy.* Now, because we distrust and even smile at this, must we also repudiate the conclusions of men who patiently observe, humbly inquire, diligently experiment, cautiously conclude, being actuated by conscientious love of truth in the whole process,—must we reject the precious fruit which these men bring us from the fields of creation, because it also happens to be called *science* or *philosophy?* We feel no disposition to reject the Christian religion, because gross delusions, debasing superstitions, monstrous cruelties, have sometimes been styled *religions.* St. Paul denounces a "science *falsely* so called;" shall we, therefore, be so simple as to reject science which is justly so called? thus fostering—under pretence of fearing—that dangerous scepticism which will not believe that "facts of Nature are the words of God." Thus, through apprehension of Infidelity, men may rush into the grossest forms of atheism; virtually denying that

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the creatures are God's creatures; that this world is God's dominion; that its laws are His institutions; that His glory shines in every part; His praise is re-echoed from every side; and that man is consecrated to be a priest, to offer up all the creatures as sacrifices of praise, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ—the great High Priest, in the Holy and Eternal Spirit.

Discarding, therefore, the pernicious dreams of "science, falsely so called," let us hear what those men tell us about the human body, who "speak what they do know, and testify what they have seen."

Instead of the body being a filthy garment, with which the soul, in its wanderings through eternity, has become accidentally invested for a short while, which never can be purified, never rendered a congenial or suitable covering for the spirit that is wrapped in it; but which that spirit should only loathe, separate itself from, and escape out of as quickly as it can;—we are taught by those who have most deeply studied the subject, that the body is a constituent part of human nature itself; so that the soul without the body is no more entitled to be regarded as *man*, than is the body without the soul; —that between these two exists a communion so intimate, however inexplicable, that all our feelings, emotions, thoughts, reasonings, memories, imagina-

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tions, and, in short, all mental acts or states whatever, take place, through the intervention and instrumentality of the nervous system—the great centre of which is the brain; and that we have no proof that, *in our present state*, any mental act whatever can be performed except through that instrumentality. Thus, mental derangement, imbecility, loss or failure of memory, and all similar phenomena, in their melancholy variety, are so many indications and effects of an impaired or a diseased condition of the nervous system. That the young apprehend and learn more quickly than the old, results from the different conditions of the brain in the two periods; and a thousand familiar appearances are explained in the same manner.

Insanity is now regarded by physicians, that is, by men who are acquainted with the subject, as a *bodily disease*, as much as fever, rheumatism, or consumption, and it is treated accordingly. I do not go about to prove these things, because this is not the proper place, and because they are too familiarly known to need proof. I state them only as truths regarding the constitution of our nature, which scientific investigators have revealed and demonstrated; and the general result of which is to explode those heathen notions, which I formerly mentioned, as equally false and profane.

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From the researches of men who study facts by the light of Reason, let us turn to the testimony of those who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and we shall find "the sure word of prophecy" confirming, most emphatically, what the former have declared. The Holy Scriptures, then, inform us that man's body, no less than his soul, is the work of God, and that He made both of them "very good;" that both are alike fallen and polluted by sin, both alike redeemed by the blood of Christ, both alike subjects of sanctification by the Holy Spirit; and that the body is co-heir, with the soul, of that immortal life which is God's promise to us in His Son. No contrast can be more striking than between the language of contempt and even of hatred in which the heathen sages speak of the body, and the reverential and honourable terms used by the sacred writers on the same subject.

"Your bodies are members of Christ." "He is the Saviour of the body." "The body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body." "Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God." We should, therefore, "yield our members as instruments of righteousness unto God." "Sin is not to reign in our mortal body." We must "glorify God in our body." We must "present our bodies, living sacrifices, holy and acceptable; which

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is our reasonable service." Paul prays for his converts that their "whole man—*spirit, soul,* and *body*—may be sanctified." What words could more expressly affirm that the essential elements of humanity are a spirit *and a material framework*—which latter is worthy of our deep regard, reverence, and affection, as part of ourselves, and part of all that we love,—as an element of that humanity which Christ our Lord has taken, and redeemed, and sanctified, and glorified? The Christian doctrine of the *Incarnation* distinctly sets this forth; for it is the assumption by the Divine Word of the human *body,* no less than of the human soul: as does, not less clearly, the Christian doctrine of the *Resurrection;* which is the reanimation and glorification of both body and soul, thus shown to be essential parts of the humanity which is restored. It is ourselves, not our filthy garments, that are to be quickened and raised up from the dust of death.*

* The union of the soul with the flesh is represented by the great heathen teacher (to whom some Christian divines have ascribed a certain measure of inspiration), as polluting and degrading. From which it naturally followed, that death was the grand felicity, being the redemption of the soul from a foul captivity, her blessed divorce from a hateful union; so that now she might regain her virgin purity, and "might dwell alone by herself, both now and hereafter." But St. Paul teaches us that this alliance is legitimate, and holy in itself; and it is our duty to provide that it be so to us. *So ought men to love their wives*

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Having thus seen that our bodies are really parts of ourselves, according to the teaching, as well of Scripture as of science, let us now attend for a little to the duty which we owe to them. This duty arises from what the body is in itself and what it is in relation to the soul.

"No man," says St. Paul, "ever yet hated his own flesh," *i.e.*, unless he acted foolishly and wickedly—in opposition at once to his reason and his instincts. To hate, or to act as if we hated our bodies, is a daring violation of God's command—an outrage upon the nature He has given us. The royal law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour *as thyself*," as-

even as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh: but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.—Eph. v. 28.

It may perhaps be here objected, that St. Paul speaks elsewhere of the body (*νῶμα*) and the flesh (*σάρξ*) in much the same strain as the Platonists. I acknowledge that the language is often strikingly similar. But any one who considers the matter, will observe: 1. That Paul constantly uses the term *flesh*, and sometimes *body*, as a metonymy for the "lusts of the flesh" (*ἐπιθυμίαι τῆς σαρκός*), the bodily appetites, considered as *ruling* and *giving their own character to the man*; so rendering him *fleshly*, carnal (*σαρκικός*); not the appetite itself, but *subjection to the appetite* being sin. 2. That the redemption which the Platonists sigh for, is *deliverance from the body altogether, absolutely, eternally*; whereas "the adoption," which is the object of Christian hope, is "the *redemption of the body*" from its *pollution*, and consequent *mortality* (Rom. viii. 23).

In that noble passage (2 Cor. v. 1-4), he contrasts the Platonic

sumes as its foundation and its measure, the duty of *loving ourselves*; the *soul* and the *body*, which constitute between them that *self* which we should love. The soul, no doubt, is our first concern; but the body is our second; and in its weal, that of the soul is in many ways deeply implicated.

No one needs to be told that bodily health and vigour, and length of days, are blessings—legitimate objects of desire—things to be thankful for. But what we do need to be told, and that with reiteration—is that our own conduct has something, has much to do with our attaining those things; that they, like other blessings, are to be sought from God, not

fancy of man's heaven being a naked, houseless soul, with the Christian hope, that the earthly tenement, frail, sinful, and mortal, would be re-edified, made heavenly and glorious, cleansed from sin, and raised superior to death: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."

Few passages in the New Testament have been more misunderstood and perverted than this. The true key to it, I submit, is the Platonic doctrine of the houseless, naked soul—with which Paul was familiar, as a man born and educated in Tarsus, a city famous for the Greek culture; and writing to Corinthians, to whom the same ideas were as well known as the common topics of pulpit discourse are to us.

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only by prayer, but by the diligent use of certain means. It is, no doubt, true, that our Creator orders all things according to the counsel of His own will; but it is no less true, on the other hand, that He who is all-wise and merciful, appoints very few of those things which concern our happiness, without some reference to our own actions; thus leaving us room to increase our welfare, or impair it. God does not bestow salvation upon us (which is the health of our souls), without our being made wise and good, that is, observant of those laws which He has established, and which are conducive to that end. These are mere truisms, yet they are the very things we are always forgetting, and for neglect of which we are so often punished.

No one is so unthinking as to deny that we can do *something* to promote the health and prolong the life of the body. But we should understand both that we may do a great deal, and that to do what we can, both for our own welfare and that of others, in this regard, is a matter of *strictly religious obligation*—being part of that duty which we owe *to God, to our neighbour*, and *to ourselves*. For we must glorify Him with *our body*.

The power of man to destroy himself is exemplified every day; but for one that is guilty of this wickedness *directly*, thousands perish by intemperance,

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bad or insufficient food, want of ventilation, noxious gases, excessive mental excitements, idleness, overworking, and the like. These paths, indeed, are often so circuitous, that people will hardly be persuaded that their "end is destruction." But that they lead down to the chambers of death as certainly as the shortest road, who does not know that ever took pains to trace them? Who does not know, in his own experience, that ever walked in them?

It is reckoned that *a hundred thousand persons die annually in England of preventable diseases.* In the same proportion, more than *a million and a quarter* must die annually over Europe; and, probably, if we consider certain customs prevailing in China and India, the great centres of population in the East, not fewer than five or six times that number must perish over the whole world.

We shudder to look upon the sanguinary track of war, as well we may: but the numbers that are slain in war are a mere fraction, compared with the countless throng of human beings that vice and ignorance are constantly tumbling into their graves. Can we think of this without horror and pity? Our religion, the religion of mercy and charity, should prompt us to study the dreadful spectacle—*sin reigning unto death.*

Probably not fewer than four hundred thousand

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men were killed during the late Russian war. But during the same period, ten times as many died in Europe alone from preventable diseases. The slaughter of four millions of persons, during three years, in war against the laws of health! so appalling a fact is surely deserving the earnest attention not only of governors, politicians, and philanthropists, but of all men who profess Christianity, and especially of those who are appointed to teach it: Because the laws of health, through disobedience to which such multitudes perish, are God's laws; for He not only ordained them, but He executes them impartially and universally, before our eyes and upon ourselves; and because the gospel which we are appointed to teach, is the religion of Him who came into the world "not to destroy men's lives, but to save them,"—to save them in a temporal as well as in a spiritual sense.

It is confidently maintained, by the most competent authorities, that a very large proportion of all the suffering that is now in the world is the result not of any invincible necessity,—in other words, does not arise out of the constitution of our nature itself relatively to that world in which we are placed, but from our ignorance of that constitution, or our disregard of those significant indications which are graciously conveyed to us. And this happens among all

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classes, to a considerable degree, but chiefly, of course, among the poorest, who, in the nature of things, are most exposed to those evils, and furthest removed from the remedy.

I am aware that some speak, and many more feel, as if this state of things were altogether irreparable; as if the constitution of society, and even the very nature of things as now existing, rendered it inevitable that that load of misery should press in its full weight upon those who, be it remembered, comprehend the vast majority of the human race. So disheartening a paradox, however, is not to be admitted without proof; and it stands opposed not only to strong presumptions but to many facts.

Suffering, under an all-wise Providence, has uses, many and evident. It is intended to awaken us to the perception that something is wrong, that our conduct, in some respects, is a violation of God's laws in the matter out of which the suffering springs. *Pain* is God's grand ordinance of instruction, inflicted until we are either destroyed or awakened to perceive and correct what is amiss. To question this is to pretend that we are living under the despotism of a blind Fate, not under the fatherly government of an all-wise, just, and benevolent God. Under such a rule, all suffering must be corrective, at least in a state of probation such as this is; for the very notion

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of cruelty is pain inflicted for no purpose, or no good purpose.

Our Creator and Moral Governor is working around us everywhere; and we are liable to be caught and crushed by the machinery in the midst of which we are placed. Is not this a call on us to examine that machinery, so that we may escape the danger? For, no doubt, it is comprehensible by us, so far at least as our safety requires; and, with equal certainty, we may rest assured, it is not designed to destroy or hurt, but to protect, help, and comfort us, if we will know and do what we may know and should do.

So much for *presumptions;* now as to *facts.* We see that the sufferings alluded to can be, for they actually are, prevented, to a considerable degree, by those persons who pay sufficient attention and exercise sufficient self-denial; that these persons escape, in whole or in part, those visitations which fall, in their full severity, upon the ignorant and self-indulgent. Companies for the assurance of life are growing rich; that is, the persons insured live longer than was calculated on. Why? Does Providence capriciously spare those people who insure their lives? Not at all. But those classes of the community are becoming better acquainted with the proper means of preserving health, and more ob-

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servant of these; and hence the average of their lives is growing gradually longer and longer. This is not accident or mystery; it is intelligible law—an example of the everlasting and universal connexion of *obedience* and *reward*. Many things occurred during the last visitation of cholera which illustrate, in the most remarkable manner, what has now been stated. On that occasion, it was found that towns, and districts of towns, and even single tenements, were exempted, in proportion as they complied with the laws of health. In London, while cholera was devastating the surrounding population, the inmates of the Model Lodging Houses were almost, or altogether, exempt. On the south side of the Thames, the mortality was more than three times greater, in proportion to the population, than that on the north side: the causes of the difference being evident.

I do not, however, maintain, that any individual, or even any one class in a community, can do all that is desirable, or all that in itself is practicable. Such is the constitution of humanity that we suffer not only for our own sins, but often also for those of others. The death that came upon us all originally, from the sin of our first father, often comes to us before its time, from the sins of less remote progenitors, and even of others not so closely connected with us. Evils which have been the joint production

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of so many, must be cured (as far as they can be cured) by the co-operation of many—of all orders in the community, the higher and the lower, yea, the highest and the lowest, under the common impulse of an enlightened charity, seeking the good of all, and in that finding their own.

But what I desire to impress upon you is, that all of us, even in our individual and family capacities, have a great deal in our own power in these matters; far more than our sloth and self-indulgence easily permit us to believe.

Having said so much to prove that we can do something for the temporal salvation of the body, I will now add a few words to show that what we can do, that we should do; that God requires us to perform that which He has graciously afforded us the means of performing.

1. Because the body is His property by right of Creation, Preservation, Redemption; and therefore we can have no right to abuse it. "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God with your body." If our bodies were our own, we might do with them what we chose; but we shall give account of our stewardship, in this regard, to Him whose they are. Indeed, this account is rendered partly even in this life.

2. Another argument showing how deeply Reli-

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gion is involved in this matter, is, that without a certain amount of *physical* well-being, a healthy moral or religious condition is not to be expected in any population, and is extremely difficult of attainment even in individuals. Certain states of the body undeniably occasion, irritate, and inflame those appetites and inclinations, which it is one great end of Christianity to repress or regulate. It is known to you all how much our blessed Saviour insists upon meekness, long-suffering, gentleness, patience, and the like. These are among the most prominent features of his teaching, and therefore these are the characteristic graces which distinguish his genuine disciples. But these graces, which are so difficult in even the best condition of our corrupt nature, are rendered almost impossible by certain states of the nervous system. Sad experience may have caused some of you to know how dire a struggle the spirit is sometimes called to maintain against the flesh; and that "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle," than for a dyspeptic person to be gentle, meek, patient, long-suffering.

An ill-fed population are stimulated to intemperance by stings too sharp for them to resist; and he who lives too luxuriously, and is too idle, will not easily be "holy in all manner of conversation." The body and the soul are too intimately united for

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either not to feel deeply the influence of the other, for good or evil.

3. Besides: our Maker requires of us a certain amount of service, *by and through our bodies.* But if we destroy the machine, how can we perform the work? Shall we not be held responsible for the service which we might have rendered, had we not broken the instrument by which alone it could be done?

4. We owe manifold duties *to men*, as well as to God; and they need our service, which He does not. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," is the second commandment; and it is "great, like unto the first." We cannot, without sin, render ourselves incapable of answering those claims, which our country, the Christian Church, our neighbours, friends, kindred, families, have upon our service. The man who, by intemperance, wilful ignorance and its consequences, or otherwise, impairs his health and shortens his days, defrauds all those to whom he owes help and comfort. Thus refusing to pay a lawful debt, he is so far an unjust man.

Every one acknowledges the truth of this remark, in the case of a parent who ruins his health. You condemn him as a man who has sinned heinously against his wife and children, whom he was bound by the most sacred ties to cherish and comfort, but

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on whom he has entailed anxiety and grief, perhaps also destitution and misery.

5. Deprived of health, we are disqualified for many duties which we owe *to ourselves;* and we are cut off from many sources of pure and ennobling enjoyment.

Whatever hinders us from communicating happiness, so far hinders us also from attaining it; for it is chiefly through doing that we enjoy good. We find our own felicity in seeking that of our fellow-creatures: and whatever renders us incapable of the one, so far cuts us off from the other also.

When, indeed, we are called to suffer in the course of God's providence (as we all are, in this sinful and mortal state), we must endeavour to suffer with patience and resignation to God's will. But, we should not believe it to be God's will that we should suffer anything, which we may by lawful means prevent. When we are involved in suffering, we can commonly *do* little, and we *need* much. Instead of helping others and consoling them, we need consolation and help ourselves; and are thus doomed to increase the burdens which we would rather lighten and ease. I do not say that there is necessarily no blessedness in this; but it is certainly the lesser blessedness; "remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."

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We should submit to poverty and other trials with fortitude and patience, *if it be the will of God that we should be poor.* But we must exhaust the resources of honest diligence, carefulness, and frugality, before we conclude that such is God's will. Patience, which is perhaps the greatest, is also the last of the virtues, the sheet-anchor of the soul, not to be had recourse to till a tempest has fallen upon us out of heaven, and we are in extremity. Let us never preach patience, when we can point out the means which shall render patience unnecessary. The patience which endures removable evils is not acceptable—it is an insult to the Almighty: it is not a grace of the Spirit, but one of those lusts of the flesh "which war against the soul," and against the body also.

After what has been said, perhaps none of you will deny that what has been insisted on is right and proper—in short, a duty. But some of you may still feel disposed to ask,—Is this a religious duty? Is it part of Christianity that we should obey these sanitary commandments, under pain of the anger of God, —under pain of guilt?

Now, let me answer,—

1. That every duty is a religious duty: for to say *it is duty*, is to say *it is required by Him whose we are, and whom we are bound to obey and serve*, at all

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times, and in all things, with all that we possess, and all that we are.

2. If anything be God's will, it is *for that reason* our law, *in whatever manner we may have discovered that it is His will*, whether it be written in a book, or signified by facts.

Supposing it were demonstrated that any institution or custom tended to generate disease in the community; for example, that marriages within certain degrees generally produced an issue deficient in bodily health and vigour; on that supposition, such marriages would be forbidden by the Almighty Governor of the world, as much as if He commissioned an archangel with a trumpet to proclaim the prohibition to the human race; or, as if He sent to every person a well-authenticated letter or book, in which the prohibition was written. To doubt this, is to doubt that there is a moral purpose in God's providence, or that its penalties are prohibitions; which seems to me the very essence of atheism.

3. A very great number, not to say a large proportion, of the ordinances of the Mosaic law, were designed to secure the bodily health and physical welfare of the Hebrew people,—besides other and higher objects to which they also were conducive in various ways; and obedience to these ordinances was to be rewarded by the attainment of those bless-

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ings; disobedience punished by physical and temporal penalties. Whatever other rewards and punishments might be *suggested* by the Law, none other but these are mentioned. This is unquestionable. (See Lev. xxvi. and Deut. xxviii.)

Since, then, regulations for securing the physical wellbeing of the people formed parts of the Jewish system, we, who acknowledge the divine origin of that system, cannot reasonably doubt, that the care of health and wise sanitary measures have a religious character, and involve a religious obligation. We could escape this inference only by holding that the institutions of Moses were in great part not religious, but merely secular.

And how can we doubt that health and long life are precious blessings and worth our earnest pursuit, when Moses promised them, in the name of the Lord, as rewards to His chosen people? The Sabbath itself was instituted for the health and relief of the body, no less than for the edification of the soul; in which merciful ordinance, slaves, and even the beasts, were considered.—(See Exod. xxiii. 12, and Deut. v. 13, 14.) So much is this the case, that, in the Pentateuch, hardly any duty connected with the Sabbath is specified but *resting*, or any purpose assigned but bodily refreshment. From which it would seem to follow, that the Sabbath is then only

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sanctified, that is, separated to its legitimate purposes, when the rest, refreshment, health of the body, are provided for and attended to, as well as the worship of God, in public and in private.

The whole tenor of the Law, and indeed of the Old Testament, is expressed in these words of Moses: —"Serve the Lord your God, and he will take sickness away from the midst of thee . . . and multiply thy days" (Exod. xxiii. 25). "If ye hearken to these judgments . . . the Lord thy God shall take from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt (which thou knewest) upon thee." —(Deut. vii. 12, 15.) "Let thine heart keep my commandments, for length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee."—(Prov. iii. 1, 2.) This, surely, was not all miracle. These felicities were to be wrought out, *in part at least*, through the operation of those common laws which govern the world now, as they did in the days of Moses and of Solomon; otherwise the law and history of the Old Testament could convey no lesson to us: their interest and value for us would be quite destroyed.

It is no doubt true, as well as remarkable, that the tone of the Christian Scriptures sounds different; "prosperity," as Lord Bacon says, "being the promise of the Old Testament, adversity of the New." But we cannot admit that it is the meaning of the

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New Testament, that a general obedience to God's laws would produce general misery in this world, when the Old Scriptures have taught that such obedience would convert it into a paradise. Nor can we allow that the extreme misery to which the early Christians were reduced, when the New Faith came first into violent collision with the old superstitions, is intended to represent the normal condition of Christians in all ages; especially when we enjoy the blessed experience that we are not "killed all the day long," or "counted as the offscouring of all things," in consequence of living as Christians; and that, at this day, they *are not* "of all men most miserable," who lead godly, righteous, and sober lives; but that, on the contrary, this course of conduct, though it may occasion suffering, prevents incomparably more than it occasions.

Besides noticing that those persecutions themselves were violations of God's law, we cannot doubt that if the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ were generally obeyed, the community would be incomparably happier, even in this world, than it could possibly be, if that religion were generally disobeyed. To deny this, would be to advance a formidable objection against Christianity, as well as to set it and Judaism flatly in opposition to each other—so proving that one of them at least, is neither divine nor true.

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We must not groan, neither must we either make or tolerate occasions of groaning, because the holy Apostles could not, with good conscience, escape the wild beasts, the rack, and the fire. "God has provided some better thing for us." No martyrdom is acceptable to Him, or a duty in us, except that which cannot be escaped without sin. "Godliness has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come." It is written, "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and they shall not hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain," *because* "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord."

Let us not, then, invent crosses, that we may carry them; or be weighed down with any that we may lawfully put aside. Suffering is the most evil thing in the world—sin only excepted, and therefore tolerable only so far as it is the medicine and cure of that root of all evil.

This world is indeed a valley of the shadow of death, where weeping and groans re-echo from every side. But disobedience and ignorance have made it what it is. As these diminish, sorrow and sighing, in the same proportion, will flee away; and even the King of terrors, whose dire tribute we cannot evade in this world, will exact his due at a later day. Still debarred from the garden, in the midst of which grows the tree of life, we are encouraged to subdue

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the thorns and briers of the wilderness, to turn the desert into a fruitful field, and in the sweat of our face to eat bread; so fighting our way back to the lost Paradise—not without good hope that the flaming sword shall at length have abated its consuming fire, and that the guardian spirits, who drove us forth, not without pity, shall have received commission to welcome back the repentant exiles; that they may eat again of the tree of life—may hear the voice of God without terror—may see His face and not die.

Unless mankind shall be taught to take a conscientious interest in their bodily welfare, they will hardly be persuaded to feel that concern which they ought, in the health and salvation of their souls. He cannot be expected to aspire after eternal life who has not learned to appreciate the blessing of temporal life. "He that is unfaithful in that which is least, is unfaithful also in much." Nor will he study to acquire ten talents, who sets no store by that one talent which the Lord and giver of life has already bestowed. In the order of His dispensations, God has suggested both the natural progress of ideas, and the manner in which these duties are evolved. He gave us first, in the Law, the rudiments of the doctrine of salvation—prescribing multifarious regulations for bodily purity and health; and afterwards in the Gos-

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pel the mystery and perfection of the doctrine; that we might be holy both in body and soul—redeemed, sanctified, saved, in both. "Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual." The elements of that which is heavenly, are still contained and suggested by that which is earthly: A consideration well deserving the attentive regard of those who not only acknowledge, but deplore, the slow advancement which "pure religion and undefiled" makes even in those countries in which it has been longest known, and is most generally professed.

The Platonizing Christianity which would induce men to care for their souls, by teaching them to contemn the fleshly tabernacle, is not less pernicious in its practical influence, than theoretically vicious and false.

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